CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study has been undertaken among the converts from Hinduism to Islam and Christianity with a view to establishing the phenomenon of religious conversion in its proper perspective. The objectives of the study have been fulfilled by projecting appropriate variables in the process of data analysis and discussion. A wide range of aspects such as socio-economic condition, social structure, inter-caste perception, circumstances and factors behind the religious conversion and impact of religious conversion have been covered. Each and every variable has been taken into account to examine the social structure and religious conversion. The major findings and conclusion that emerged from the analysis and discussion are briefly summarized hereunder. Some important suggestions are also made to improve the condition of the people who are prone to religious conversion in contemporary society.

5.1. Major Findings

Sex, Age and Marital status

1. 91.5 percent of the respondents were male; 52 percent of the converts belonged to the age group of 26-35 and 89.5 percent of the respondents were married.
Details of caste, Religion and Educational status

2. 50 percent of the respondents belonged to the Chakkiliyan caste, Muslims and Christians constituted 50 percent each in this study, and 48.5 percent of the respondents had had primary education.

Type of House, ownership of House and availability of electricity

3. 74.5 percent of the converts had kutcha houses, 78 percent had own houses and 87 percent had electricity facility in their houses.

Occupation, annual income, expenditure and liabilities

4. 81.5 percent of the respondents were engaged in agriculture, 36.5 percent of the converts annual income was below Rs. 10,000, 30.5 percent of the respondents’ annual expenditure was between Rs.20,00 land 30,000 and 34 percent of the respondents had liabilities below Rs. 10,000.

Assets possession and land

5. 48 percent of the converts had Rs.25,001- 50,000 worth of assets and 51.5 possessed land.

Social relationship

Political participation, Role of Caste in village festivals

6. In Dindigul District 97 respondents reported active political participation whereas 75 respondents of Coimbatore District reported only passive participation. Hindu domination is more in Coimbatore District which accounts for the passive political participation of the converts.
In Dindigul. District 65 of the Muslim converts do not attend village festivals. In Coimbatore District. 6 L of the Christian converts attend village festivals; and, 59 percent of the respondents reported insignificant role in village festivals.

Discrimination. Experiences in Original faith and converted faith.

7. 97 percent of the respondents experienced the discrimination, in the original faith and 56.5 experienced it in the converted religion also.

Inter-east perception about conversion

8. Remaining in a particular religion is an individual choice, but its impact has social consequences. So, in order to find out the reality of conversion, inter-caste perception is essential to analyse conversion.

Caste Hindus perception about conversion

9. In both the districts most caste Hindus do not accept the converts as Christians/ Muslims; their perception has not changed. The caste Hindus want to maintain their traditional supremacy over the low castes. Moreover, their conversion can not be called a real conversion because it is inducement based conversion.

They are getting assistance from Christian/ Muslim leaders. Church/ Muslim leader are also working with the conversion motive. Because of outside contact, in the name of caste organization, the Scheduled Castes are inviting some people from outside the village; moreover, now-a-days the Scheduled Castes are educationally, economically some what better when compared to traditional days.
10. The non-converted Scheduled Castes never felt any difference in the social relationship with the converts, because the converts are living near them without changing their residence. So, normal relationship still exists between the groups.

The non-converted Scheduled Caste people felt that there was no justifiable reason available for preventing the conversion; Hindu religion does not give equality to them. Conversion is the only way to escape from all ill treatments. Moreover, involuntary conversion can not be called real conversion; if their demands/ needs are fulfilled probably they will reconvert to the original faith.

The non-converted Scheduled Castes also once planned to convert but, due to family members, relatives’ compulsion they did not do so. They are mostly agricultural coolies and depend on caste Hindus for their livelihood. So they need some support from the caste Hindus.

**Circumstances and Factors behind Religious Conversion**

**Perception about conversion**

11. 8. 61 percent of the Dindigul District respondents felt that their conversion was conscious; 47 percent of the respondents from Coimbatore District felt that conversion was unconscious.
Opinion about nature of conversion.

12. 9. 61 percent of the Muslim converts in Dindigul District felt that it was voluntary process, whereas 87 percent of the Christian converts of Coimbatore District felt that they were induced and forced.

Receipt of Scheduled caste benefits after conversion:

13. 56 percent of the converts in Dindigul District and 88 percent of the Coimbatore District respondents have been receiving benefits meant for Scheduled Castes. The converted Scheduled Caste people keep their Scheduled Caste identity as it is.

**Receipt** of Educational assistance from **Missionaries:**

14. 48 percent of the Muslim converts and 92 percent of the Christian converts of Coimbatore District are in receipt of educational assistance from missionaries.

**Place of employment and nature of relationship with land owners:**

15. 85 and 76 of the Dindigul District respondents were working in high caste people’s land and same caste people’s land respectively. In Coimbatore District 100 and 16 respondents were working in high caste people’s land and same caste people’s land respectively. Overall 92.5 percent of the respondents were working in high caste people’s land and 46 percent in same caste people’s land.
Impact of Conversion

Use of burial ground after conversion.

16. 84 percent of the Dindigul District converts to Islam have a separate mosque; only 16 felt that the mosque is then-proper burial ground. But, in Coimbatore District the entire (100 percent) respondents were using the Scheduled Caste burial ground.

Link with Hindu, religion,

17. 68 of the Dindigul District respondents and 74 of the Coimbatore District respondents have links with their original religion. But 32 of the respondents from Dindigul District and 26 from Coimbatore District do not maintain links with their original religion.

Interest in attending prayers before conversion and after conversion

18. In Dindigul District, before conversion, 73 of the respondents had been attending prayers and 27 of them did not attend prayers. But, after conversion, 53 of them attend prayers and 47 do not.

In Coimbatore District, before conversion, 62 had been attending prayers and 38 did not attend prayers. After conversion, 70 of them are attending prayers and 30 did not attend prayers regularly.
Nature of respect received, from caste Hindus after coaversion

19. In Dindigul District 65 respondents had achieved a higher status and 35 felt no change. In Coimbatore District 68 reported no change and only 32 percent felt some change in the relationship. Conversion did not bring about any change in the social relationship with caste Hindus.

Reason, for Caste conflict in rural areas

20. In Dindigul District 90 and 75 of the respondents reported awareness of rights; intolerance towards the development of the lower castes was the reason for caste conflicts in rural areas.

In Coimbatore District 85 and 78 of the respondents reported domination and untouchability as the reasons for caste conflicts respectively.

Caste domination, untouchability, intolerance are the main reasons for caste conflict.

Expectation behind the conversion

21. 87 percent of the respondents converted for improved social status, 80 percent felt ill-treated, another 80 percent felt fear of caste clash and 55.5 percent converted for economic benefits.

Peer group influence in conversion

22. In Dindigul District 54 respondents felt religious conversion was due to peer group influence. In Coimbatore District 72 respondents were influenced by the peer group.
Experience of New way of life after conversion

23. 67 of the Dindigul District respondents experienced a change in their social life. In Coimbatore District 42 of the respondents felt a new way of life. Overall 54.5 percent of the respondents are experiencing a new way of life and 45.5 percent do not have a new way of life.

Expectation from Caste Hindus

24. 93 percent of the converts expected equality from caste Hindus, 93.5 percent expected dignified treatment, and 30.5 percent expected social concern. The converted respondents mostly expected equality and dignified treatment.

Conviction of Hindu Ideologies before conversion

25. In Dindigul District 63 respondents were dissatisfied with Hindu ideologies, whereas in Coimbatore District 80 felt dissatisfied with Hindu ideologies. Overall 71.5 of the respondents were dissatisfied with Hindu ideologies.

Conviction of problem solving in converted religion

26. The majority (53.5%) of the respondents did not feel any difference in either of the religions in problem solving. 57 of the Christian converts had conviction in Christianity for solving problems.

Influence Mass media in conversion

27. 78 of the Muslim respondents from Dindigul District did not have mass media influence. In Coimbatore District 62 of the Christians converted due to mass media influence.
Conviction of Religious ideologies before and after conversion

28. 67 percent of the respondents had little conviction and 33 percent have very strong conviction in Hindu religion while they were Hindus. After conversion 42 percent of the respondents have very strong conviction in their respective converted religions. 58 percent of the respondents have little conviction in their converted religion.

The Muslim religion establishes a strong conviction in its converts. But Christianity fails to do so. On the other hand Hindu region also fails to establish a strong conviction in its members.

Cultural/Ecclesiastical influence in conversion

29. More than 50 percent stated that attraction of church/mosque worship, dislike of animal worship, negative view about Hindu religion, respect gained by converted people were the major reasons behind their conversion.

Matrimonial relationship details

30. In Dindigul District only 39 of the respondents, and in Coimbatore District 52 respondents preferred matrimonial alliance in the original (Hindu) religion. The majority (86%) of the respondents preferred to have matrimonial relationship with the converted segments only. So, caste still exists, even after conversion, whereas Muslim converts gained better status than Christian converts.
Contact with Hindu religious festivals and ceremonies

31. Overall 59 percent of the respondents had maintained contact and 41 percent did not have contact with their original religion. Less Musb'm converts and more Christian converts have contact with their original religion. The reason behind this is their inability to forget their past religious life and relatives, family members and children’s compulsion.

Social factors in conversion

32. 89 percent of the respondents said that conversion took place in order to erase the low caste identity, 89 percent felt social discrimination as the major reasons for their conversion.

Expectation at the time of conversion

33. 86.5 percent of the respondents expected as a untouchability-free religion, 77.5 percent expected equality, 71 percent expected better social status, 60.5 expected money and material benefits and 59.5 percent wanted to erase the low caste identity.

The Dindigul District respondents gave more preference to social and cultural aspects when compared to economic and employment expectations. In Coimbatore District the respondents expected economic benefits along with social expectations.
Improvement of economic condition

34. 19.5 percent of the respondents felt some change in their economic condition and 80.5 percent did not experience any change in their economic condition after conversion. Conversion did not bring any change in their economic condition.

Gains after conversion,

35. 68.5 percent of the respondents were free from untouchability, 50 percent each of the respondents gained money and felt that their low caste identity is erased, and, 30.5 percent of the respondents gained job opportunities.

Perception about loss of S.C status

36. 66 percent of the respondents retained their Scheduled Caste identity. Only 44 percent of the respondents lost their Scheduled Caste identity. Converts keep dual identity for collecting benefits from both the Government and the missionaries.

Nature of treatment from Caste Hindus after conversion

37. 51 percent of the respondents experienced the same relationship with caste Hindus though they are converted to another religion. Conversion did not bring about any change in social relationships.

Occupational change

38. In Dindigul District 64 of the respondents did not have any change in occupation after conversion. In Coimbatore District 52 of the respondents had an occupational change; occupational mobility has taken place only in Coimbatore District, not in Dindigul District.
Perception about reconversion particulars

39. 40 percent of the respondents decided to reconvert to their original faith, i.e., the Hindu religion. Another 38 percent of the respondents have not yet decided about reconversion. Only 27 percent of the respondents preferred to remain in the converted fold.

5.2. Suggestions

1. Awareness can be created among low caste people about myths and realities of conversion.

2. The Government should make clear that the existing policies and programmes are meant for Scheduled Caste only.

3. Scheduled caste / Dalit is a social identity specification in the Hindu religion only. So, the proposal for according Scheduled Castes status to converts should be entirely reexamined/reconsidered.

4. Hindu organisations can provide religious education from childhood onwards.

5. The Government should monitor the funds from foreign countries in the name of social services.

6. Religious conversion is the major reason for differences between various communities, the Government must ask the groups involved to give up such practices and strive for maintaining communal harmony among the various groups.
7. Social education campaigns can be conducted in sensitive areas to educate the people on the Constitutional position and social legislations regarding religious conversion.

8. Peace Committees can be formed with help of youth from various caste groups.

9. Political parties and party leaders can act as mediators in problem solving.

10. Government officials should take action against caste Hindus irrespective of their caste background.

11. The Village panchayat may be made strong by involving lower caste people in the decision making process.

12. In order to prevent forced/induced conversion a central legislation can be enacted.

13. Religious literature should be circulated only with the approval of the state government.

14. Leaders of communal and religious organisations who instigate violence should be severely punished.

15. More employment opportunity should be created in order to wean away the youth from the stranglehold of anti-social elements.

16. The Government should encourage non-political, secular and non-governmental organisations to actively involve themselves in maintaining peace and amity in the state at all levels.
17. Education programmes should be launched to bring about an awareness among the people on the need for communal amity and harmonious living for the development of the country.

18. The Government should take immediate action to stop the prevention of the use of public facilities by the Dalits by people of other castes. Suingent action should be taken against those who indulge in such activities.

19. The training programmes for employment conducted by the THADCO should be made more meaningful and be implemented on a war footing. Since most of the agricultural lands are in the hands of the caste Hindus, Dalits are denied employment and therefore employment opportunity should be created for them, in labour intensive industries.

5.3. Scope for further Research.

The present study has been conducted with specific objectives in two districts of Tamilnadu. There are certain issues remaining unexplored in this research. The researcher presents the following.

1. The present study was confined to only two districts of Tamilnadu. So, similar studies can also be conducted throughout Tamil Nadu to gain a comprehensive picture about the realities of religious conversion and the factors behind conversion.
2. Religious conversion expectations and realities need to be researched thoroughly.

3. A study can also be conducted on the reasons behind the non converts of other people of the Scheduled Castes.

4. A study on the role of missionaries in religious conversion can also be conducted.

5. Psychological aspects could be included in further research.

6. Case studies/ focus group discussion could be made to understand in depth and more specifically matters related to religious conversion.

5.4. Conclusion

Conversion is possible only with those who do not have faith in their religion and god. There is no use of preventing the conversion of unfaithful people. Conversion can continue for the sake of the democratic, secular ideas of the Indian Constitution. Conversion is an individual choice and, therefore, it cannot be forced. It can also be noted that, the minority will become the majority in the near future which may lead to cultural disintegration, cultural conflict, religious violence, and even terrorism may be the result of conversion. Conversion in the true sense implies a total renewal, a change. So, it is neither advisable nor desirable, and the religion into which a person is bom is the best for his spiritual upliftment.
Conversion in India, either Islam or Christianity, is taking place mostly because of certain problems in the social structure. The untouchable and out caste theoretically finds the non-discriminatory practices, which have a great attraction for Hindus, particularly the low caste people, who are subjected to lot of inhuman practices in the Hindu social structure, particularly the caste structure. Escape from all this subjection and oppression is not at all possible as long as they remain in the Hindu religion. Another important element working in favour of religious conversion is the economic condition. The low caste Hindus will go on the path of the missionary, who assists for their economic betterment. If poor economic condition is not a major reason for the conversion probably their awareness and educational betterment may be the cause for their conversion.

But, in reality, conversion does help in neither economic nor social life. The Scheduled Castes can wait for changes over the years. Caste restrictions and inhuman treatment will be eliminated or reduced. The Government has protected them legally and provided opportunities for their better life.

The caste Hindus must realize the importance of humanism; socio-economic changes are automatically taking place in life. So man should treat man as man. Differences can not be based on caste. The missionaries and religious organizations should not misuse the Constitutional provisions to exploit the socially, economically lower groups. The religious organizations should respect the sentiments of the common people. The Government must adopt a sympathetic view towards the socio economic condition of the Scheduled
Castes of Tamilnadu and take steps to improve their condition. Any ban on religious conversion will curtail genuine conversion and freedom of an individual,

In short, change of religion alone does not help in improving the socio-economic conditions. Maintaining the social structure intact is necessary for those who have vested interests in the status quo. For alteration or change in the social structure the lower caste people will have to wait another 50 years.